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Before the Appropriations Committee

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee. My name is Pamela Hunt and I am a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) in Taftville. I have been taking care of my son for the past 14 years. My son was born with a condition called Trisomy 13, otherwise known as Patau Syndrome, in which the individual's cells have three copies of the 13th Chromosome instead of the usual two. Due to this, he has significant anomalies. He is deaf, blind, non-verbal, has cognitive disabilities and is wheelchair bound. As a mother I fight for him everyday.

My son requires 24 hour care, yet I only get paid 8 hours a day. I make a little more than my fellow PCAs, but most PCAs make \$18.25/hour, which is far less than we need to live. For example, it takes \$73,000 for a family of four to live: to have a roof over their heads, to put food on the table, put gas in your car, buy clothes for your children, and so on. We are lucky if we make \$30,000. Not only that, but we have almost zero benefits.

I'm a cancer survivor, and a COVID survivor. With that being said, PCAs are not able to receive health insurance through our jobs, private insurance is too expensive, and many of us make too much to qualify for Husky. Also, without paid sick leave I cannot get sick or take a day off if I need to take care of myself. This would be challenging for anyone. But as a cancer survivor this puts me in an especially precarious position, as I have to remain healthy, yet the stress and fear of getting sick is having an adverse impact on my wellbeing. Who is going to take care of my son should anything happen to me?

Since January, my son has been fighting a life-threatening infection. I've been out of work for weeks. Unemployment benefits still haven't kicked in, and without any paid time off I wonder how long it will take for me to be couch surfing like some of my fellow PCAs. I feel like the State of CT is failing families like mine.

Everyone deserves health insurance, sick time, and living wages. Last year you passed our contract that included paid time off and a stipend for health insurance. Almost a year later, we have yet to receive our stipends, and can't access our paid time off. Why do we have to fight for what should be basic human rights? It's time the state honored their promises and supported PCAs and those we care for. Thank you.